Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-29 (canceled)

Claim 30 (currently amended): ~~The method of claim 29, further comprising the step of~~

A picture coding method including the steps of:

inputting moving picture data having an arbitrary frame rate that is not known in advance;

determining the input frame rate of the inputted moving picture data;

providing a target value for a buffer storage amount;

determining a buffer remaining amount of the coded picture data stored in a buffer and not yet outputted by the apparatus;

calculating a correction amount based on a difference of said target value and said buffer remaining amount; and

calculating a target code amount for use in said coding step by adding said correction amount to said reference target code amount, wherein said target code amount is based on said input frame rate;

providing a reference coding frame rate based upon said input frame rate;

calculating a reference target code amount using said reference coding frame rate, wherein said target code amount is determined based upon the reference target code amount; and

updating said reference coding frame rate, wherein said reference coding frame rate is determined based upon an average value of said measured frame rates within a time interval, and wherein, when the reference coding frame rate before being updated is larger than the reference coding frame rate after being updated, a value between said reference coding frame rate before being updated and said reference coding frame rate after being updated is used as an updated reference coding frame rate.

Claims 31-34 (canceled).

Claim 35 (currently amended): ~~The method of claim 34, further comprising the step of~~ A picture coding method including the steps of:

inputting moving picture data having an arbitrary frame rate that is not known in advance;

determining the input frame rate of the inputted moving picture data;

providing a reference coding frame rate;

determining a reference target code amount using said reference coding frame rate;

providing a target value for a buffer storage amount;

determining a buffer remaining amount of the coded picture data stored in a buffer and not yet outputted by the apparatus;

calculating a correction amount based on a difference of said predetermined target value and said buffer remaining amount;

calculating a target code amount for use in said coding step by adding said correction amount to said reference target code amount; and

updating said reference coding frame rate, wherein,

said reference coding frame rate is determined based upon an average value of said measured frame rates within a time interval, and wherein, when the reference coding frame rate before being updated is larger than the reference coding frame rate after being updated, a value between said reference coding frame rate before being updated and said reference coding frame rate after being

updated is used as an updated reference coding frame rate.

Claims 36-39 (canceled).

Claim 40 (currently amended): ~~The method of claim 39, further comprising the step of~~

A picture coding method including the steps of:

inputting moving picture data having an arbitrary frame rate;

coding said moving picture data into coded picture data for storage in a buffer prior to outputting said coded picture data;

determining the input frame rate of the inputted moving picture data;

determining a reference coding frame rate using said input frame rate;

calculating a reference target code amount using said reference coding frame rate;

determining a target value for a buffer storage amount using said reference coding frame rate;

determining a buffer remaining amount of the coded picture data stored in the buffer and not yet outputted by the apparatus;

calculating a correction amount based on a difference of said predetermined target value and said buffer remaining amount; and

calculating a target code amount for use in said coding step by adding said correction amount to said reference target code amount, wherein

the code amount of the outputted coded picture data is approximated to said target code amount in said coding step; and

updating said reference coding frame rate, wherein

said reference coding frame rate is determined based upon an average value of said measured frame rates within a time interval, and wherein, when the reference coding frame rate before being updated is larger than the reference coding frame rate after being updated, a value between said reference coding frame rate before being updated and said reference coding frame rate after being updated is used as an updated reference coding frame rate.

Claims 41-44 (canceled).

Claim 45 (currently amended): ~~The method of claim 44, further comprising the step of~~

A picture coding method including the steps of:

determining a reference coding frame rate using the input frame rate of inputted moving picture data;

calculating a reference target code amount using said reference coding frame rate;

determining a target value for a buffer storage amount using said reference coding frame rate;

determining a buffer remaining amount of the coded picture data stored in a buffer and not yet outputted by the apparatus;

calculating a correction amount based on a difference of said predetermined target value and said buffer remaining amount; and

calculating a target code amount for use in said coding step by adding said correction amount to said reference target code amount; and

updating said reference coding frame rate, wherein,

said reference coding frame rate is determined based upon an average value of said measured frame rates within a time interval, and wherein, when the reference coding frame rate before being updated is larger than the reference coding frame rate after being updated, a value between said reference coding frame rate before being

updated and said reference coding frame rate after being updated is used as the updated reference coding frame rate.